



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

April 23, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Mike Flanagan, Chairman 

SUBJECT: Approval of Criteria for the Michigan School Readiness Program Evaluation Grant

The Michigan School Readiness Program for four-year-old children at risk of school failure has been operating in Michigan school districts and private agencies since 1985-86. From FY 1994 through FY 1997, a three-year grant to the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation was awarded after a competitive process to implement an evaluation study of students in the state-funded, pre-kindergarten program. From FY 1998 through FY 2002, and from FY 2003 through FY 2007, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation was successful in competing for five-year grants to continue the evaluation study. Results of the evaluation have been publicized widely, indicating that the program is successful in helping at-risk children be prepared for success when they reach school. The Michigan School Readiness Program Evaluation has been recognized nationally as having the most valid research design of any of the state pre-kindergarten program evaluations. High/Scope has also helped the Department participate in multi-state evaluations of pre-kindergarten programs, assuring that Michigan remains on the leading edge of this important educational improvement activity. In addition, the evaluation has aided Department staff in planning and implementing program improvements.

For FY 08, \$300,000 is again available to continue the evaluation of the Michigan School Readiness Program. The Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services proposes to manage a competitive process for an independent outside evaluator for up to five years, pending continued appropriations and appropriate progress of the grantee.

The attached "Criteria for the Michigan School Readiness Program Evaluation Grant" provides background information and the proposed criteria for the next five years of the longitudinal study.

It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the Criteria for the Michigan School Readiness Program Evaluation Grant as attached to the Superintendent's memorandum dated April 23, 2007.

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Criteria for the Michigan School Readiness Program Evaluation Grant

The State Board of Education has adopted as its Strategic Goal "Attain substantial and meaningful improvement in academic achievement for all students/children with primary emphasis on high priority schools and students."

To the extent possible, all grant criteria and grant awards will serve to further attain the above goal.

PRIORITIES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS THAT THESE CRITERIA SUPPORT

The Michigan School Readiness Program is designed to help at-risk, four-year-old children enter school "safe, healthy, and eager to succeed in school and in life." This vision of the Great Start system supports the Board's goal of improving achievement for underperforming students as they enter school, and was addressed by the Task Force on Early Childhood. Evaluating the Michigan School Readiness Program and improving its effectiveness are critical activities.

BACKGROUND/PURPOSE OF GRANT

Competitive Formula New Continuation (check all that apply)

The Michigan School Readiness Program for four-year-old children at risk of school failure has been operating in Michigan school districts and private agencies since 1985-86. From 1994 through 2007, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation has conducted a longitudinal study of the effectiveness of the program, providing important data on the impact of the state-funded, pre-kindergarten program on children's development and academic success. In addition, the evaluation grantee has provided important technical assistance to local programs and the state for program improvement. The current five-year grant period will conclude at the end of the fiscal year, but \$300,000 is again available for FY 2008 to continue the evaluation. The Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services proposes to manage a competitive grant process for an evaluator to continue the evaluation for up to five additional years, pending continued appropriations and appropriate progress of the grantee.

CRITERIA

Date criteria were last approved May 9, 2002

Defined in Legislation Defined in Department's Approved Grant Application to the Funder Proposed by Staff

The successful applicant will have experience with longitudinal evaluations of preschool programs and with program improvement activities. The successful applicant will:

- Continue the intensive evaluation of cohorts of program and comparison group children at selected sites around the state, following their continued progress in school;
- Define a process to continually determine whether children currently participating in the program are ready for successful participation in kindergarten;

Re-establish the link between the program quality standards in the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten* and outcomes for children;
Collect data on risk status information of all children participating in the program;
Develop recommendations on additional child assessment and program assessment collection protocols and tools, including advice on instrumentation for any legislated child outcomes collection activities;

- Provide advice and consultation to the Department and local programs on program improvement activities; and
Collect data on preschool classroom quality.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS/TARGET POPULATION TO BE SERVED BY GRANT

An eligible applicant for the evaluation grant will be any agency or organization which can demonstrate previous experience in the design and utilization of program and process evaluation, which incorporates stakeholders and both qualitative and quantitative methods. Priority will be given to applicants who can demonstrate previous experience in the evaluation of programs for preschool-aged youngsters and their families, as well as previous experience in the evaluation of elementary-aged children and elementary school programs. In addition, the successful applicant must demonstrate an understanding of developmentally appropriate early childhood programs and appropriate assessment of young children, and the capacity to support this activity. Preference will be given to Michigan-based research organizations and institutions. All Michigan School Readiness Program grantees will be included in the evaluation efforts, including data collection on the entire cohort of children funded through the program each year (more than 27,000 children in 2006-2007).

TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE

\$300,000 annually (anticipated)

LEGISLATION

The State School Aid Act, Section 32d(2), included \$200,000 for the evaluation in FY 2007, and the same amount is proposed for FY 2008. An additional \$100,000 has been available in the Department of Education Appropriations Bill for this purpose. The grant will be renewable for four additional years, pending continued funding and adequate progress.

OFFICE ADMINISTERING GRANT/PROGRAM CONTACT

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